

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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O 311008Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9481
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 5066

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MOPS, PEPR, LE, SY, IS
SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN LEBANON

REF: (A) STATE 220264, (B) STATE 220880 (NOTAL)

1. CARRIED OUT INSTRUCTION IN REFTTEL (A) WITH BOUTROS MORNING AUGUST 31. AFTER READING THE QUESTIONS TO HIM, I ADDED THAT DRAPER HAD SUMMONED THE SYRIAN CHARGE IN WASHINGTON AND TOLD HIM THERE IS EVIDENCE SOME SYRIAN OFFICERS WERE CLEARLY GOING BEYOND THE POLICY GUIDELINES WHICH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAD TOLD US WAS OFFICIAL POLICY. BOUTROS QUICKLY COMMENTED THAT IS QUITE TRUE. I THEN REVIEWED AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S APPROACH TO QADDOUR, STRESSING THE POINTS OF DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTION AS GIVEN IN STATE 220266, OMITTING AS INSTRUCTED PORTIONS ON SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL OR ON STATEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL. I THEN NOTED THAT,
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AS THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICES HAVE REPORTED, OUR CHARGE IN TEL AVIV HAD SEEN BEGIN, WITHOUT FURTHER AMPLIFICATION.

2. BOUTROS REPLIED THAT HE COULD GIVE ME ONLY PRELIMINARY REPLIES AND COMMENTS AT THIS POINT, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE HE WANTS TO DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

WITH SARKIS. HE ASKED ME TO GIVE HIM A COPY OF OUR QUESTIONS IN WRITTEN FORM (WHICH I HAVE DONE). WITH REGARD TO HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH ASSAD, BOUTROS WAS NOT VERY FORTHCOMING. HE SAID THAT SARKIS HAD SENT HIM A MESSAGE IN LATTAKIA ABOUT THE ADF KOURA-CEDARS OPERATION, BUT THAT THE MESSAGE DID NOT REACH HIM IN LATTAKIA UNTIL AFTER HIS DISCUSSION WITH ASSAD. BOUTROS CONTINUED THAT ASSAD IS NOT GENERALLY AWARE OF THE DETAILS OF ADF OPERATIONS IN LEBANON. BOUTROS REPORTED THAT ASSAD DOES NOT INSIST ON A MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM AND "DOES NOT SEEM TO BE RELUCTANT TO HAVE A POLITICAL SOLUTION"; HOWEVER, HE BELIEVES A POLITICAL SOLUTION CANNOT BE REACHED UNLESS THE LEBANESE FRONT MODERATES ITS ATTITUDES AND SHIFTS ITS POSITION. BOUTROS CONTINUED THAT IF THE LEBANESE FRONT ACTS AND BEHAVES AS IF IT IS REALLY AN ALLY OF ISRAEL, THAT "COMPLICATES THE SITUATION" AND POSES A THREAT TO THE SYRIAN REGIME AND TO THE BAATHIS. (IN THIS LAST SENTENCE, IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER BOUTROS WAS STILL QUOTING ASSAD, OR GIVING HIS OWN OR THEIR JOINT OPINION.)

3. BOUTROS DID GIVE ANSWERS TO ONE OF OUR QUESTIONS, NAMELY WHAT COULD THE USG DO (PARA 4 REFTEL). HE SUGGESTED WE COULD SAY THREE THINGS TO THE SYRIANS, IN THE NAME OF THE USG ITSELF, NOT SPEAKING
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FOR THE GOL: (A) STRESS THAT INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION INCREASINGLY WONDERS IF THE SYRIANS ARE GOING BEYOND THEIR MANDATE IN THE ADF. IT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE EVIDENT THAT THEY ARE, SO THAT REAL SYRIAN AIMS ARE BEING QUESTIONED. (B) IF SOME SYRIAN OFFICERS OVER-RIDE THEIR GUIDANCE ORDERS, THE RESULTS COULD BE VERY DANGEROUS. (C) THE SYRIANS SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE THREATS WHICH THE ISRAELIS ARE MAKING REGARDING ANY CHANGE IN "THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION" IN THIS AREA WHICH WOULD BE THE CASE IF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WERE SMASHED.

4. BOUTROS SAID THAT AFTER FURTHER PERUSING OUR QUESTIONS IN WRITING, HE WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH US BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE ON SATURDAY SEPT. 2, AND GIVE COMMENTS EITHER TO ME TOMORROW OR TO AMBASSADOR PARKER SATURDAY MORNING IF THE LATTER HAS RETURNED BY THEN. HE SAID HE WOULD BE BACK IN THE COUNTRY ON SEPTEMBER 7; PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD LEAVE FOR ROME SEPTEMBER 3 BUT RETURN SEPTEMBER 5. BOUTROS REITERATED HIS CLOSE INTEREST IN THE CAMP

DAVID MEETING.
KINSOLVING

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